WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1.   A method for communicating from a printer to a remote support location, comprising:

　　　　receiving an affirmative request for an assistance from a user of a printer:

　　　　　　said request having been triggered by said user's engaging a button on said printer;

　　　　generating and transmitting a request for assistance to a remote support location in response to said user's request; and

　　　　providing an indication to said user that a request for assistance has been transmitted.

2.   The method of claim 1 at least one step of which is conditioned on verifying authorization of said user.

3.   The method of claim 2 where said verification includes biometric authentication.

4.   The method of claim 2 where said verification occurs at said printer

5.   The method of claim 2 where said verification occurs at said remote location.

6.   The method of claim 2 where:

　　　　said remote location includes a computer sending a print job to said printer;

　　　　said print job being suspended until said user is at physically said printer; and

　　　　said request for assistance includes a verification that user is physically at said printer.

7.   The method of claim 1 further comprising:

　　　　receiving a response from said remote location; and

　　　　conducting an interactive communication between said user and said remote

17

location.

8. The method of claim 7 further comprising conditioning said interactive communication on authorization of said remote location.

9. The method of claim 7 where said interactive communication is performed using VoIP.

10. The method of claim 7 where said interactive communication includes allowing said remote location to interrogate said printer.

11. The method of claim 10 where said interactive communication includes establishing a service call for said printer.

12. The method of claim 1 where:
said printer acts as a gateway to at least another device connected thereto; and
said request includes information of said another device.

13. The method of claim 12 where said information pertains to a print spooler feeding said printer from said another device.

14. The method of claim 12 where said another device includes a consumer electronic device.

15. The method of claim 12 further comprising receiving said requested information in response to a user-initiated download request.

16. The method of claim 12:
where said another device includes a computer driving said printer; and
further comprising: receiving an updated driver for said computer, and
transmitting said driver to said computer.

17.	The method of claim 1 further comprising:

before at least said transmitting, attempting to locally resolve a problem at said printer; and

transmitting said request in response to a failure of local resolution.

18.	The method of claim 1 where said remote location includes a service establishment independent from an owner of said printer.

19.	The method of claim 1 implemented in a facsimile machine.

20.	The method of claim 1 implemented in a copier.

21.	The method of claim 1 where said request includes information pertaining to characteristics of a print job being processed.

22.	The method of claim 1 where said request includes information pertaining to a physical status of said printer.

23.	The method of claim 1 where said request includes identification information of said printer.

24.	The method of claim 1 further comprising providing an indication of unavailability while said printer remains out of service.

25.	The method of claim 1 where said request includes audiovisual information captured from said user.

26.	The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of said printer and said remote location is protected by a firewall, and further comprising communicating between said printer and said remote location via a channel in said firewall.

27.   A computer-readable medium for communicating from a printer to a remote support location, comprising computer logic instructions that, when executed:

  receive an affirmative request for an assistance from a user of a printer:

    said request having been triggered by said user's engaging a button on said printer;

  generate and transmit a request for assistance to a remote support location in response to said user's request; and

  provide an indication to said user that a request for assistance has been transmitted.

28.   The computer-readable medium of claim 27 further comprising logic instructions that when executed:

  receive a response from said remote location; and

  conduct an interactive communication between said user and said remote location.

29.   The computer-readable medium of claim 28 further comprising logic instructions for conditioning said interactive communication on authorization of said remote location.

30.   The computer-readable medium of claim 27 further comprising logic instructions for implementing VoIP communications.

31.   The computer-readable medium of claim 27 where:

  said printer acts as a gateway to at least another device connected thereto; and

  said request includes information of said another device.

32.   Apparatus for communicating from a printer to a remote support location, comprising:

  means for receiving an affirmative request for an assistance from a user of a

printer:

    said request having been triggered by said user's engaging a button on said printer;

means for generating and transmitting a request for assistance to a remote support location in response to said user's request; and

means for providing an indication to said user that a request for assistance has been transmitted.

33.   A printer capable of communicating with a remote support location, comprising:

    a printer engine;

    an external button configured to be engaged by a user of said printer making an affirmative request for an assistance;

    request management circuitry for generating and transmitting an assistance request in response to said user's affirmative request; and

    a network interface for transmitting said assistance request to a remote location capable of communicating with said printer.

34.   The printer of claim 33 further comprising authentication circuitry for authorization of said user.

35.   The printer of claim 33 further comprising:

    receiving a response from said remote location; and

    conducting an interactive communication between said user and said remote location.

36.   The printer of claim 35 further comprising VoIP circuitry for performing said interactive communication.

37.   The printer of claim 33 where:

    said printer acts as a gateway to at least another device connected thereto; and

said request includes information of said another device.

38. A method for receiving a communication from a printer at a remote support location, comprising:

receiving an affirmative request for an assistance from a user of a printer:

said request having been triggered by said user's engaging a button on said printer;

establishing an interactive communication over a communications network with said user at said printer.

39. The method of claim 38 further providing authorization of said remote location to said printer.

40. The method of claim 38 where said interactive communication is performed using VoIP.

41. The method of claim 38 where said interactive communication includes interrogation of said printer by said remote location.